

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for producing methionine comprising—the following steps:

- (1) a first step of converting raw material, ~~capable of~~ producing methionine through hydrolysis, into a form of methionine-containing aqueous ammonia solution through hydrolysis in an aqueous ammonia solution with a biocatalyst having hydrolyzing activity;
- (2) a second step of separating the biocatalyst from the methionine-containing aqueous ammonia solution obtained in the first step, and
- (3) a third step of distilling ammonia out of the methionine-containing aqueous ammonia solution separated in the second step to deposit and separate crystals of methionine.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to claim 1, wherein 2-amino-4-methylthiobutyronitrile as the raw material is hydrolyzed in an aqueous ammonia solution with a biocatalyst having nitrile-hydrolyzing activity.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to claim 1, wherein 2-amino-4-methylthiobutanamide as the raw material is hydrolyzed in an aqueous ammonia solution with a biocatalyst having amide-hydrolyzing activity.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein an aqueous solution containing 1.5 to 10 fold equivalent amount of ammonia corresponding to that of methionine in the methionine-containing aqueous ammonia solution obtained in the first step, is used as aqueous ammonia solution.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~claim 1, wherein the concentration of methionine in the methionine-containing aqueous ammonia solution obtained in the first step is 5-30 wt%.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~claim 1, wherein the biocatalyst is reused.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~claim 1, wherein an immobilized bacterium is used as the biocatalyst.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~claim 1, wherein the distilled ammonia and the mother liquor, from which crystals of methionine are separated and recovered, are reused for hydrolysis reaction.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method for producing methionine according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~claim 1, wherein the first step is performed under ~~pressurization~~pressure.